



## Archdiocese of St. Louis

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Dear priests and faithful of the Archdiocese,

Peace be with you!

For the past three years, the Catholic Youth Apostolate, Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri (GSEM) and concerned parents have been in dialogue to confront the many issues and concerns surrounding Girl Scouts USA (GSUSA) and their relationship with the international umbrella organization, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

In addition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has been in dialogue on a national level with GSUSA. As a result of those meetings, the USCCB issued a Question and Answer statement. It can be found on the USCCB website, [usccb.org](http://usccb.org). (Type "Girl Scouts questions" in the search bar, then click the second link. It is a PDF titled "Questions and Answers About Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) and Catholic Scouting.")

As Bishop Rice also stated in a letter addressed to all priests in June, the Girl Scout program has enjoyed a long history of cooperation with our Catholic parishes. On that note, the Catholic Youth Apostolate commends the service of the dedicated Girl Scout troop leaders who have volunteered their time and effort with the very best intentions and motivations to provide a program that helps our Catholic girls grow in leadership and character.

However, GSUSA is a secular organization, and as such does not fully promote the teachings of the Catholic Church. Secular organizations are prone to move with the culture and trends of the world, which are certainly not always in line with the 2,000 year history and tradition of the Catholic Church.

I wanted to highlight just a few of the concerns that have surfaced. ( This list is not exhaustive by any means):

- WAGGGS supports and promotes "sexual and reproductive health and rights," and in many of their materials promotes artificial contraception and abortion.
- GSUSA pays in excess of \$1,000,000 each year as membership dues to WAGGGS. This total is based on the total number of girls registered as members in GSUSA. The funds come from investments income. However, by having girls in our parishes as registered Girl Scouts, more money goes to WAGGGS. Many of the programs WAGGGS offers do not support Catholic teaching and tradition.
- "World Thinking Day" is an optional program within Girl Scouts that has a fundraising component for WAGGGS within it.
- Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem are frequently presented as role models in Girl Scout materials. They promote and teach a worldview that is contrary to Catholic tradition.
- The *Journeys* series (GSUSA's manuals) contain many other role models and organizations that promote views contrary to Church teaching as well. Some of these were removed after we raised concerns, but certainly not all.

It seems counterproductive to me that we need to be so vigilant in identifying problematic areas within GSUSA material. If we are using a program to help shape and form our girls into faithful women of God, shouldn't we offer and promote solid programs that help enrich their faith life?

Quoting Bishop Rice's letter to the priests again, he said,

"The Office of Catholic Scouting states that 'Our Ministry is to bring the message of Jesus Christ to youth and adults involved in scouting through faith formation programs and retreats...' Since parents are the 'first teachers of their children in the ways of faith' (Baptism Ritual), we must do our best to offer programs that support parents as they fulfill their mission. To that end, there are two additional resources to assist in the faith formation of girls, the American Heritage Girls (Christian) and Little Flowers Girls Club (Catholic). I encourage you to familiarize yourself with these viable scouting options for girls."

I encourage anyone interested in finding out more about these two groups to visit their websites:

- American Heritage Girls: [www.ahgonline.org](http://www.ahgonline.org)
- Little Flower Girls Club: [www.beholdpublications.com/LFGC\\_home.htm](http://www.beholdpublications.com/LFGC_home.htm)

I am pleased to say that we are in the process of forming a committee to support these groups within our Catholic Scouting Ministry office for the whole Archdiocese. In addition, all of the Catholic formation programs and retreats offered by the Catholic Youth Apostolate will continue to be open to any and all girls seeking to grow in their knowledge and love of the Catholic faith.

Our long history with the Girl Scouts does not make this an easy issue to address; however the culture is changing. Our faith can oftentimes set us apart from what is popular and trending in the world, so here we begin to feel that pull. While secular programs feel they must change with the culture to survive, Jesus calls us to stand in the truth.

Please meet with your pastor if you would like to establish one of the recommended faith based groups in your parish. I also encourage you to engage in the many faith formation programs and retreats we offer through the Catholic Scouting Ministry office, so together we can help shape and form our girls into faithful women of God.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. We in the Catholic Youth Apostolate are here to serve you.

Yours in Christ,



Father Brian Fischer  
Executive Director  
Catholic Youth Apostolate